

Weekly Update from Administration for 12/21/11
Many Accomplishments to Share
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

As we approach the end of the year I would like to take this opportunity to share some of our accomplishments. I consider this year to have been very successful due to the hard work and dedication of all the employees.

With a lot of hard work from staff and partners in our community, we were able to attract the Cheney Brothers company to develop a new food distribution center in Charlotte County. This will result in a significant number of new jobs in our community. In these hard economic times this is a wonderful and exciting opportunity, and one that will benefit many people in this community. We are delighted that the Cheney Brothers company was able to see that Charlotte County is a wonderful place to work and to live, and we welcome them to the community.

The coming budget process will not be as extensive as we continue into the second half of our first 2-year budget process. Having a reduced budget process over the next few months will allow departments to analyze the many changes that have taken place over the past years and consider adjustments as necessary. Services have been scrutinized, outsourcing implemented, processes eliminated. Now is the time to review to ensure we have the best models in place.

The Solid Waste division implemented phase II of the Landfill Gas-to-Energy Project (electric generation). Methane gas is collected from the decomposing trash and used to power electric generators. The resulting electricity is sold to a private energy company and transported through the FPL transmission network.

Through the creation of numerous operational efficiencies at the county's water and wastewater treatment plants, Charlotte County Utilities has saved many thousands of dollars for their customers in 2011. New installation of UV shade cloth over chlorine contact chambers and effluent filters at multiple sites resulted in an average 17% savings in chlorine usage. The repair or rehabilitation of various plant components and equipment using in-house staff saved tens of thousands of dollars on outsourcing or purchasing of new equipment. Finally, the installation of a solar powered pressure/level transmitter on the reclaimed storage ponds at West Port WRF is resulting in a lifetime of savings in electricity costs.

Here are some "wow" statistics from our Charlotte County Library system. Our total annual circulation jumped from 854,977 to 939,134—we are hoping to break one million in 2012! The number of annual visitors went from 628,580 to 644,532 and staff answered 31,277 reference questions. Over the year staff presented 479 programs, many of those funded by the Friends of the Library, with an attendance of 12,487. This attendance is 3,000 more people than last year. Staff also provided 1,547 hours on technology instruction for the public. This is an area where demand for this service has increased so much due to the current economic conditions. In addition, the library system was gifted with 21,189 hours of volunteer help.

This past July a departmental consolidation was made to combine the Engineering division from Public Works with Growth Management and Building Construction Services. This action resulted in the formation of a new department now known as Community Development. From this consolidation we are experiencing a more efficient and effective operation with respect to all Community Development

Department tasks, and the use of county staff, available resources, interdepartmental coordination and communications is greatly enhanced.

A great moment during the past year was the White House blog that featured Charlotte County on April 22. The blog praised the County's efforts in creating a more resilient and sustainable community in response to the devastating effects of Hurricane Charley and the economic recession. It also highlighted a number of the County's innovative energy efficiency projects and initiatives. Assistant County Administrator Kelly Shoemaker and Program Liaison Jason Stoltzfus were privileged to represent Charlotte County at the White House for the Gulf Coast Sustainable Economies Roundtable in July. This prestigious event was attended by select national representatives from the public, private, non-profit and educational sectors as well as numerous representatives from eight major federal agencies. Ms. Shoemaker and Mr. Stoltzfus were able to share information about Charlotte County, discuss opportunities for national collaboration, and connect with high level federal representatives. Also during the trip, Mr. Stoltzfus joined a number of leaders from across the Country to be recognized as a Champion of Change for his accomplishments related to hurricane recovery.

I am so proud about the accomplishments and accolades that our staff had over the year. We continue to work together and aim high to accomplish and improve our products and services. I look forward to a new year with many more exciting things happening in our community.

Happy holidays!